

An Analysis of Administrative Staff's Participatory Decision Making through Syura at International Islamic Tertiary Institution

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Abstract: *The objective of the study is to investigate the administrative staff's participation in decision-making through the principle of Shura or consultation at International Islamic Tertiary Education Institution. The study involved purposive sampling of 255 non-academic administrative staff at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from all Kulliyahs, Centres, and, Divisions. This research used a set of survey questionnaire as means of gathering data on participatory decision-making among respondents. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used to organize and summarize the information gathered since the nature of research is exploratory. The result of the study shows that the highest percentage for the all five items in the scale is "Mostly" which is 37.56% followed by "Often" which is 34.04% then average mean of "Always" is 13.16%. This is followed by "Occasionally" with 10.98% and the last is "Never" that recorded 4.24%. However, the average mean score to all the 5 items is 3.44 and Standard Deviation is 0.992 which indicate that the system of Shura was implemented and the majority of the staff participated in the decision-making through the system of Shura at IIUM. The high participation of staff in decision making may improve the employer-employee relationships, enhances productivity, effective administration and promotes transparent, accountability and good governance in the organization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The institution of *Shura* does play a crucial role in the political and social progress of well organized societies. The principle of *Shura* was not the continuation of tribal institutions before Islam, which had undergone definite modification by adapting moral principles as mentioned in the Quran. *Shura* obliges the group or people to get involved in decision-making as a process of ensuring transparency, accountability, collective responsibility, tolerance and unity of purpose. *Shura* signifies the acknowledgement of the will of the people and challenges the ability and integrity of the administrator or manager and his wiliness to accommodate divergent views. This principle makes it clear that whatever it takes to make a decision by way of *Shura*, the leader has to accept it and put the trust in Allah for the ultimate results. Moreover, it is divinely directed and fully applied in the operation during the time of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and *Khalifah ar-Rasyidin*.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Shura

Shura (شورى) is an Arabic word which exactly means 'consultation'. The term *Shura* is a noun which is taken from the Arabic work "*shawara*". To understand the exact meaning of *Shura*, it is essential to know *Shara*, *Yusharu* and *Mushawrah* which means to show things. In explaining the linguistic and rhetorical features of the word *Shura*, Jabr (2009) wrote that, "*Shawara* (consult) is derived from *Shara* which means he gathered or took out honey from the comb, and separated it from the wax *Shara alayhi* means he gave him an advice; he offered him a counsel. *Yusharuhu* means he consulted him, he sought his opinion of an advice; he discussed with him in an order to

find out his opinion. *Mushawarah* means, a good counsel or consultations. *Shura* means, mutual consultation”.

2.2 Institution of Shura

The principle of participation in Islam can be drawn from the Companions participation in all decision-making process made during the life time of the Prophet which brought legitimacy and satisfaction at all levels of human endeavours (Jabnoun, 1994). However, the legal framework of participation in Islam can be derived from the following Quranic verses, “Those who answer to the command of their Lord and establish regular prayer and conduct their affairs by mutual consultations; who spend out what we bestow on them for sustenance” (Surah Al-Shura 42: 38).

The above verse of the Quran is the basis for participatory decision-making on which every person charged with the affairs of the community or the organisation ought to adhere to. It is very clear from this verse that Islam does not support autocracy or absolutism and that a leader is accountable not only to Allah SWT but also to the people he purports to serve. In other words, people participation is a prerequisite and obligatory upon a leader or manager who conducts the business or administration of a company or organisation in accordance with the principles of *Shura*. The scope and extent of the applicability of the *Shura* is very broad and covers all aspects of life (Al-Atari, 1999).

Shura obliges the group or people to get involved in decision-making as a process of ensuring transparency, accountability, collective responsibility, tolerance and unity of purpose. *Shura* signifies the acknowledgement of the will of the people and challenges the ability and integrity of the administrator or manager and his wiliness to accommodate divergent views (Alhabshi, et al. 1998).

Islam further holds the belief that only those areas specifically regulated as either *Haraam* (unlawful), *Halaal* (lawful) or *Fardh* (obligatory) by the Quran and by the Sunnah (words, deeds and sanctions of the Prophet PBUH) are absolute and binding without any reservations (Thaib, 1994: 23). Meanwhile, unregulated matters which may fall under the category of *Mubah* (permissible) require consensus (Ijma) or mutual consultation to be valid which must be conducted in accordance with Muslims’ code of ethics and morality (Shaikh, 1988: 121).

However, according to Shaikh (1988) and Al-Atari (1999), what constitutes the Muslims’ code of ethics and morality is defined in the following verse of the Quran, “Help you one another in righteousness and piety, but help you not one another in sin and hatred. Fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment”. The word *Shura* nowadays is related to exchanging views, and consulting others. *Shura* is obviously mentioned three times in the Holy Qur’an which, amongst other definitions, outlines it as a process by which consensus can be accomplished thus preventing ideological deadlocks which eventually guide toward sin and disunity. Consequently, it can be said that the origin meaning of *Shura* from its literal usage is to “take out honey from the little hollow in the rock in which it is put down by the bees” (Ibn Manzur, 1999).

Allah is strict in punishment”. (Surah Al-Ma’idah: 2): The technical term for the people constituting members of *Shura* as defined in Islamic literature “*Ahl-al-Hal-wal-aqd*” (wise and influential people). These are people who command authority in their respective discipline of knowledge and experience (Al-Atari, 1999; Thaib, 1994: 46).

Accordingly, Al-Atari (1999), Al-Talib (1991) and Thaib (1994) are in agreement that it is incumbent upon a leader to make decisions based on popular or majority opinion, although it is argued that in Islam the majority is not a proof of truth (Thaib, 1994). But as the Prophet (PBUH) said in the Tradition reported by Al-Trimizi, Abu-Dawood and Ibn Majah that, “My Ummah (Muslims) cannot agree on an error” is sufficient evidence that *Shura* is mandatory in Islam. This tradition makes it clear that whatever it takes to make a decision by way of *Shura*, the leader has to accept it and put the trust in Allah for the ultimate results (Jabnoun 1994: 58; Al-Atari, 1999).

The wisdom behind the legitimacy of *Shura* in Islam is to prevent absolutism and autocracy in the decision-making process. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have stated that, “Those who seek what is best shall never fail, and those who consult shall never regret”. However, *Shura* was understood by the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) as a fundamental principle for good governance and accountability in the administration of public affairs. Al-Khalili (2000) argues

that governance imposes great responsibility on governors to involve the governed in a *Shura* decision-making as a pillar in Islam in order to protect the general welfare of the community. He further argues that *Shura* brings the true realisation of equality of mankind and their dependability on each other. Regardless of their different characteristics, talents, status or authority, they are all slaves of Allah SWT. *Shura* espouses the principle of check and balance and imposes limitation on the exercise of power and against arbitrariness (Muindi, 2011).

It is clear that the principle of *Shura* was not the continuation of tribal institutions before Islam, which had undergone definite modification by adapting moral principles as mentioned in the Quran. It is divinely directed and fully applied in the operation during the time of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and *Khalifah ar-Rasyidin*. Islam does not support autocracy or absolutism and that a leader is accountable not only to Allah SWT but also to the people he purports to serve. There is a consensus among all Muslim jurists that *Al-Shura* is the legal process which gives the people a right to participate in the decision-making process in Islam.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study is to investigate the Administrative Staff Practice of *Syura* at International Islamic Tertiary Education Institution, particularly at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The analysis is focused on the research question: "Do administrative staff in an educational organization participate in decision-making through the principle of *Shura* (Consultation)"? One could observe that IIUM is an Islamic organization, so it is important to put the Islamic practices in place in all affairs of the university. That is why the researcher wished to answer the above-mentioned question on *Shura* (consultation) implementation in the institution.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involved purposive sampling of 255 non-academic administrative staff at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from all Kulliyahs, Centres, and Divisions. This research used a set of survey questionnaire as means of gathering data on participatory decision-making among respondents (Cresswell, 2005). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used to organize and summarize the information gathered since the nature of research is exploratory. Analysis of data was done in line with the research questions. Percentage and simple frequency as well as standard deviation were to be used for each to present tendencies in the responses of the respondents (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). T-test and descriptive statistics were used for the analysis. These methods of analysis are simple and efficient in drawing reliable findings and vital conclusions. The test statistic tool chosen depended on each research question to be answered (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

5. DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

The subjects of this research consisted of 255 administrative staff who were selected from *kulliyah*, centres, and divisions of International Islamic University Malaysia. The responses of the administrative staff regarding gender show that females were 188 (73.7%) and only 67 (26.3%) were males which indicates that females are dramatically dominant compared to male non-academic staff at IIUM. Regarding respondents' work experience at IIUM, the largest group has been for 1 to 3 years 70 (27.5%). This may be due to some recently established *kulliyah*, centers and divisions which led to new recruitment of administrative staff within this period of time.

In addition, the second largest categories were those who have between 4 to 9 years and 20 years and more of experience with the same number of administrative staff which was 59 (23.1%).

However, the group with the least working experience at IIUM was that between 15 and 19 years with only 27 (10.6 %) non-academic staff. Moreover, the second smallest category was between 10 and 14 years of working experience at IIUM with 39 (15.3%) of the respondents.

6. ANALYSIS OF DATA

If we look at Table 1 below, we will discern that the construct contained 5 items to measure the system of *Shura* in the act of making decisions at IIUM. Additionally, the levels are defined in the

questionnaire to answer each item for this study based on the Likert-scale: 1 = Never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = Often, 4 = mostly, 5 = Always.

6.1 Participation of Administrative Staff through Shura

The result of the analysis of Administrative Staff Practice of Syura at International Islamic Tertiary Education Institution, Malaysia is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Participation of Administrative Staff through Shura (N = 225)*

		1	2	3	4	5	M	St.D
1. My supervisor always retains the final decision-making authority within my department.	N	7	27	96	91	34	3.46	.946
	%	2.7	10.6	37.6	35.7	13.3		
2. My supervisor always tries to include one or more employees in determining what to do and how to do it. However, he/she retains the final decision-making authority.	N	6	26	90	98	35	3.51	.934
	%	2.4	10.2	35.3	38.4	13.7		
3. My supervisor asks for employees' ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects, but finally determines the decision on his/her own.	N	12	37	78	97	31	3.38	1.028
	%	4.7	14.5	30.6	38.0	12.2		
4. My supervisor delegates tasks in order to implement a new procedure or process, but still keeps veto power to him/herself.	N	16	25	88	92	34	3.40	1.041
	%	6.3	9.8	34.5	36.1	13.3		
5. My supervisor often involves others in problem solving, team building, but still retains the right for final decisions.	N	13	25	82	101	34	3.46	1.011
	%	5.1	9.8	32.2	39.6	13.3		
Total /Average Percentage		4.24	10.98	34.04	37.56	13.16	3.44	0.992

1 = Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Often 4 = Mostly 5 = Always

In the practice of *Shura* Item 1 “My supervisor always retains the final decision-making authority within my department” shows that the highest percentage in the scale is “Often” which is 37.6% of all the responses, followed by “mostly” which is 35.7%, then “Always” is 13.3 %, this is followed by “Occasionally” with 10.6% of all the responses. However, the lowest percentage in the scale is “Never” that recorded 2.7%. The total mean score for Item 1 is M= 3.46. This indicates that the supervisors retained the final say in the decision-making.

In the practice of *Shura* Item 2 “My supervisor always tries to include one or more employees in determining what to do and how to do it. However, he/she retains the final decision-making authority”, shows that the highest percentage in the scale is “Mostly” which is 38.4% of all responses, followed by “Often” which is 35.3%, then percentage of “always” is 13.7 %, this is followed by “Occasionally” with 10.2% of all responses. However, the lowest percentage is “Never” that recorded 2.4% of participants. The total mean score for item 2 is M= 3.51. Supervisors at IIUM consulted their administrative staff about what and how to do things.

In the practice of *Shura* Item 3 “My supervisor asks for employees ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects, but finally determines the decision on his/her own” shows that the highest percentage in the scale is “Mostly” which is 38.0% of all the responses, followed by “Often” which is 30.6% then “Occasionally” with 14.5 %, followed by “Always” with 12.2% of all responses. However, the lowest percentage in the scale is “Never” that recorded 4.7% of all responses. The total mean score for this Item 3 is $M = 3.38$. Therefore, the administrative staff are often asked by their supervisors about their ideas and plans; however, their leaders still make the last decision.

In the practice of *Shura* Item 4 “My supervisor delegates tasks in order to implement a new procedure or process, but still keeps veto power to him/herself” shows that the highest percentage in the scale is “Mostly” which is 36.1% of all the responses, followed by “Often” which is 34.5% “Always” with 13.3 %, which stand in the third position in the order of multitude, this is followed by “Occasionally” as 9.8% of all responses. However, the lowest percentage in the scale is “Never” that recorded 6.3% of all responses. The total mean score for this item 4 is $M = 3.40$. Most of the administrative staff revealed that they are delegated by their supervisors; however, their leaders still have the veto for that.

In the practice of *Shura* Item 5 “My supervisor often involves others in problem solving, team building, but still retains the right for final” shows that the highest percentage in the scale is “Mostly” which is 39.6% of all the responses, followed by “Often” which is 32.2%, then average mean of “Always” is 13.3 % followed by “Occasionally” with 9.8% of all responses. However, the lowest percentage in the scale is “Never” that recorded 5.1% of all responses. The total mean score for Item 5 is $M = 3.41$. Thus, the administrative staff agreed that they had been involved in the problem solving; however, their supervisors still had the final decision.

In general, it can be noted from Table 1 above that the highest percentage for the all five items in the scale is “Mostly” which is 37.56% followed by “Often” which is 34.04% then average mean of “Always” is 13.16%. This is followed by “Occasionally” with 10.98% and the last is “Never” that recorded 4.24%. However, the overall mean score to all the 5 items is 3.44 and Sd. is 0.992 which indicate that the system of *Shura* was implemented and the majority of the staff participated in the decision-making through the system of *Shura* at IIUM.

6.2 Result of one-Way ANOVA for Administrative Staff's Practice of *Shura* According to their Characteristics

A one way between group analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of administrative staff's background in practice of the principle of *Shura*. The background of the non-academic staff was divided into four sections: work experience, qualification, job position, and organization.

The result of one-Way ANOVA for Administrative Staff's Practice of *Shura* according to their Characteristic is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Results of one-Way ANOVA for Administrative Staff's Practice of *Shura* according to their Characteristics

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Working experience	Between groups	12728.031	4	3182.008	.809	.521
	Within groups	983706.698	250	3934.827		
	Total	996434.729	254			
Qualification	Between groups	35164.594	4	8791.148	2.286	.061
	Within groups	961270.135	250	3845.081		
	Total	996434.729	254			

Job position	Between groups	47823.455	9	5313.717	1.372	.201
	Within groups	948611.274	245	3871.883		
	Total	996434.729	254			
Organization	Between groups	143277.774	23	6229.468	1.687	.029
	Within groups	853156.955	231	3693.320		
	Total	996434.729	254			

The results for each section of background of the participants were found for work experience as follows: work experience resulted in ($F=.809$, $p=.521$), qualification resulted in ($F=2.286$, $p=.061$), job position resulted in ($F=1.372$, $p=.201$), and organization resulted in ($F=1.687$, $p=.029$).

Therefore, these results indicate that as far as the background of the administrative staff is concerned; there is no difference in work experience, job position and qualification $P >.05$. However, there is a difference in the organization of the administrative staff $P <.05$.

7. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, with regard to administrative staff's participation in decision-making through the principle of *Shura*, the findings of descriptive statistics show that the system of *Shura* is fully implemented at International Islamic University Malaysia. It is hope that the high participation of staff in decision making may improve the employer-employee relationships, enhances productivity, effective administration and promotes transparent, accountability and good governance in the organization.

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